



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING YOUR FOOD STAMP APPLICATION & FOOD STAMP RIGHTS

To help you complete the Food Stamp application, we are providing the following information. If you have questions about this information, please contact your local Family Support Division (FSD) office or Customer Service Center.

FILING AN APPLICATION

Your date of application is the date the application is received in the county office with your name, address and signature. You may file an application in person, by mail, by fax, or online through the Missouri Benefits Center.

WE CANNOT ISSUE ANY FOOD STAMP BENEFITS TO YOU UNTIL THE APPLICATION FORM IS COMPLETED, SIGNED, RETURNED TO THE FSD OFFICE WITH PROOF OF YOUR IDENTITY, AND AN INTERVIEW HAS TAKEN PLACE.

If you qualify for emergency help, your worker must have proof of your identity before issuing Food Stamp benefits. Send proof of your identity with your application if you are mailing or faxing the form to the office. Or, bring a document into the office with your application.

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

Complete all the blanks on the application form. **YOU MUST** sign the first page and the last page of the application under "Signature".

If you are returning your application by mail, fax, or online, be sure to write a phone number on the application so we can call you for any additional information needed to finish your application. Tell us the best time to talk with you. (If you do not have a telephone or prefer, you can call us a few days after you mail or fax the form.) We **must** talk with you to conduct an interview.

FORMS

Below is a list of the forms that may be sent to you and information on how to fill them out. If you cannot complete the forms or you do not understand the questions(s), contact the local FSD office for assistance.

1. **APPLICATION FOR BENEFITS (FS-1):** Write your name, address, individuals who reside with you, and the entire household's identifying information. Sign your name on the first and last pages. RETURN THE COMPLETED FS-1, APPLICATION FOR FOOD STAMP BENEFITS; THE FA-520, NOTICE OF EXPIRATION OF FOOD STAMP BENEFITS; AND APPLICABLE VERIFICATION(S) TO YOUR LOCAL COUNTY FAMILY SUPPORT DIVISION OFFICE OR CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER.

BE SURE TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS ON THE APPLICATION. IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS AT THIS TIME, A DETERMINATION WILL BE MADE REGARDING YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR EXPEDITED FOOD STAMP BENEFITS WHEN YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION IS RECEIVED IN THE COUNTY OFFICE.

2. **INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING YOUR FOOD STAMP APPLICATION AND FOOD STAMP RIGHTS (IM-31F):**

This form explains how to file an application, possible sources of verification needed, and advises you of your rights as a Food Stamp applicant.

YOU KEEP:

- Any informational leaflet; and
- This letter of instruction, IM-31F

ON THE NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM ARE EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION OR VERIFICATION WHICH MAY BE NEEDED IN ORDER TO COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION. PLEASE PROVIDE VERIFICATION OF ITEMS THAT APPLY TO YOU. YOUR ELIGIBILITY SPECIALIST WILL RETURN THE ITEMS TO YOU.

VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION

A voter registration application has been included. If you wish to register to vote, please complete the form and return to your local FSD office. This has no impact on your application or continued eligibility for assistance.

INFORMATION NEEDED BY YOUR FOOD STAMP ELIGIBILITY SPECIALIST

Listed below are examples of the most common sources of verification used to determine your eligibility. If you have other documents or verification, discuss these items with your eligibility specialist. Your eligibility specialist may also need the name, address, and phone number of a reference who can verify your statements.

IDENTITY Identity must be verified for every applicant applying for Food Stamp benefits. Some examples of verification are:

- Driver's license
- Photo identification card
- Other papers that verify your identity
- Social Security card
- Birth certificate

RESIDENCE To apply for Food Stamps, you must be a resident of Missouri. Verification of residence can be:

- Rent or mortgage receipts
- Mail addressed to you
- Utility receipts
- References contacted

RESOURCES Verification of resources may not be required. Your eligibility specialist will notify you if verification of resources is needed. Resources include money you may have, such as:

- Bank accounts
- Lump sum payments
- Boats
- Farm equipment (out of use more than 12 months)
- Savings bonds
- Credit Union accounts
- Campers
- Property you own such as real estate other than your home
- Stocks
- Money owed to you
- Airplanes
- Certificates of Deposit (CDs)

If needed, verification documents can be:

- Copies of bank statements
- Copies of deeds or purchase agreements
- Copies of CDs, stocks and/or bonds

INCOME Income includes, **but is not limited to**, salary you receive as an employee or money you earn as a self-employed person. This includes, **but is not limited to**:

- Job
- Baby-sitting
- Odd jobs
- Temporary work
- Farming

Income also includes benefits you receive, such as:

- Social Security/SSI,
- Temporary Assistance
- Veteran's benefits
- Child support or alimony
- Unemployment or worker's compensation

Documents to verify income may include

- Wage stubs
- Award letters from Social Security/SSI, or Veteran's Administration
- Divorce Decree
- For self-employment income, verification includes records of money received and expenses you may have
- Copies of child support checks
- Check stub for Unemployment Compensation benefits or Worker's Compensation checks

DEDUCTIBLE EXPENSES Shelter expenses and child care expenses may not require verification. Your eligibility specialist will notify you if verification of these expenses is needed. A deductible expense for Food Stamps includes the following:

- Housing costs such as rent or mortgage payment
- Utility costs such as electricity, gas, water, sewer, trash, telephone, real estate taxes or homeowner's insurance,
- Dependent care or child care costs, including transportation to and from the day care provider, child support paid to non-household members.

Medical expenses are deductible if you, or any member of your household age 60 or over, or disabled, pay for the expense. These can be:

- Prescription medicine
- Dental care
- Costs of doctor visits
- Medical supplies
- Health insurance
- Costs of dentures
- Medicare premiums
- Glasses
- Transportation to the doctor
- Hearing aids

DSS PRIVACY POLICY

ATTENTION: Federal regulations require that the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) maintain a publicly available "Notice of Privacy Practices" that describes our policy for handling protected health information. The department has implemented a privacy policy and prepared a Notice of Privacy Practices. You may obtain a copy of this notice on the DSS Web Site at <http://www.dss.mo.gov/hipaa/hprivacy.pdf> or from any county DSS office.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A FOOD STAMP APPLICANT/PARTICIPANT

- ✓ You or someone you send always have the right to apply for Food Stamp benefits the day you contact ANY Family Support Division (FSD) office or Customer Service Center by phone or in person.
- ✓ A Food Stamp application can be sent to you in the mail the day you call the FSD office. You can mail the application back to the FSD office, fax it, or bring it in person to a FSD office.
- ✓ When applying for Food Stamp benefits, you can also apply for other help such as Medical Assistance, Temporary Assistance (cash assistance), or Child Care assistance at the same time. Or, you can apply just for Food Stamp benefits.
- ✓ If you file a joint application for Food Stamps and another assistance program and you are ineligible for the other assistance program, your Food Stamp application will not be denied solely on the basis that the other assistance was denied.
- ✓ The Food Stamp Program does not have time limits like Temporary Assistance does.
- ✓ Receiving Food Stamp benefits does not affect whether you are eligible to receive Temporary Assistance.
- ✓ If you lose your eligibility for Temporary Assistance because you go to work, meet your time limits, or for some other reason, you may still be eligible to receive Food Stamp benefits.
- ✓ You will need to be interviewed before your application can be completed. The interview may be in person or by phone.
- ✓ When your Food Stamp benefits are ending, you will receive a notice and a Food Stamp application in the mail. Fill it out, mail, fax, bring the application in person to a FSD office or complete an application online through the Missouri Benefits Center.
- ✓ It is important that you let us know about any expenses you may have because you could be eligible for more Food Stamp benefits based on these expenses.

You may be eligible to receive “expedited” or emergency Food Stamp benefits in 7 days. Otherwise, we will process your application in 30 days.

To receive Food Stamp benefits for everyone in your household, you must give FSD each person’s Social Security Number. We will use the Social Security Number to:

- ✓ get information about each person from the Social Security Administration, IRS, Mo. Division of Workforce Development, Mo. Dept. of Corrections, Veterans Administration (VA), Division of Child Support Enforcement, local law enforcement, employers, etc.,
- ✓ find out whether you are already receiving benefits in Missouri or from another state.

If you do not want to give us the Social Security Number for someone in your household, the remaining household members may be eligible to receive Food Stamp benefits, without including those persons.

To receive Food Stamp benefits for everyone in your household, you must give FSD the immigration status for any non-citizen in your household. If you do not want us to check on your immigration status or the immigration status of anyone else in your household, you can decide not to apply for Food Stamps for yourself or for any other person in your household. This may cause you to be ineligible for Food Stamps or to be eligible for a lower amount of Food Stamp benefits than you would get if you apply for everyone in your household.

The staff of the Family Support Division is committed to quality customer service:

- ✓ You have the right to see or get copies of anything in your case file and have the papers explained to you in a language you understand.
- ✓ You have the right to a fair hearing if you disagree with any decision or action made on your case, if you are denied Food Stamps, or Food Stamp benefits are reduced.
- ✓ You have the right to talk to and bring a lawyer, a friend, a relative, or anyone else to a hearing on your case.

You have the right to be treated fairly. In accordance with Federal law and U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, 1400 Independence Avenue, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20250-0410 or call (866) 632-9992 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.